

**Submission
No 153**

**INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT METHODS AND IMPACTS OF
CULTS AND ORGANISED FRINGE GROUPS**

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Submission to the Inquiry into Cults and Organised Fringe Religious Groups

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Introduction, context and scope

1. My name is Marisha McAuliffe. I previously lived and worked in Victoria, Australia, and now reside in [REDACTED] Vietnam.
2. ***It is necessary to provide a trigger warning before reading this document as there are explicit mentions of childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence and psychological abuse.***
3. ***I wish this submission to be made public.***
4. Perhaps at times over-compensating for my own feelings of self-worth, I am a life-time Senior Fellow in Learning and Teaching from the Higher Education Academy (UK), have a PhD in Architecture and Cognitive Science (QUT), Bachelor of Interior Architecture (Hons) (Adelaide University), PG Cert. in Learning and Teaching (University of Oxford), Diploma of Nursing (Federation University), and a Graduate Diploma of Maxillofacial Surgery (University of Melbourne).
5. I have held long term successful roles as an academic in the Creative Industries and held senior leadership positions in public¹ and private universities across Australia, New Zealand, India, and Vietnam. My track record of research² is significant, and my accomplishments are personally meaningful⁴, although have been a challenge to achieve. My reputation within the higher education sector is globally well known and respected, and I have worked hard to achieve that success.
6. To give you this context above is important, as since my childhood and early adult years in the SSPX, the struggle to be 'approved', 'seen', 'visible', 'acknowledged', and 'successful' (in this sense, "*not a failure*" – more than a victim) has driven me to lengths to appear (at least externally) as someone who did not break under the sense of overwhelming shame, and give into my suicidal tendencies within my late teens, 20's and 30's.
7. This submission aims to give an insight and perspective of myself as a former member of the Society of St. Pius X (hereafter referred to as 'SSPX') community in Victoria, Australia. It is my lived experience at the SSPX churches in [REDACTED] Victoria, AU, and [REDACTED] in Kansas, US.
8. Although I respect the boundaries of this Inquiry with its focus on Victoria, the connection between the SSPX in Australia and the US is pertinent and relevant to this submission. My experience within the SSPX is one that continues to have an - at times overpowering - impact on my life, my choices and relationships, and despite more than three decades since I was sexually abused and psychologically damaged by the SSPX, the damage has been sustained and the scars run deep.
9. Since 1983, I have experienced, witnessed and attempted – but failed - to bring to light the ongoing criminal activities within the SSPX, even if only to break the generational cycle of trauma for children and women of the future. For this report, I shall give context in **Section 2**, then in **Section 3**, focus on *behaviors and actions, and methods of control*, specifically:
 - Psychological control
 - Behavioral control

¹ <https://www.b2match.com/e/canada-vietnam-education-partnership-forum/sessions/c2Vzc2lvbjoxNTQ4NzA=>

² <https://www.igi-global.com/affiliate/marisha-b-mcauliffe/442137>

³ <https://scholar.google.com.au/citations?user=tIEq5HoAAAAJ&hl=en>

⁴⁴ <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=%22marisha+mcauliffe%22>

- Information control
- Financial control
- Emotional/spiritual exploitation
- Sexual and physical abuse

Then **Section 4** will be on the *impacts*:

- Psychological
- Social
- Developmental

of the SSPX, with the final **Section 5** on the conclusion. Overall, I shall provide my own experience along with references that aim to give a broader picture of the situation, thus helping to support an evidence-based submission.

10. The evidence provided in this document includes links from the SSPX's own websites from Australia and abroad, news articles, reports, and online forums that show many hundreds of people discussing their own experiences within or having left the SSPX. This aspect is important, and although some individuals may dismiss such forums as mere hearsay, it is worth noting that there are just as many people in such forums supporting the SSPX (often in a highly misogynistic and sometimes offensive manner) as those not supporting the SSPX. These forums should give the reader a more realistic and nuanced understanding of the SSPX specifically in relation to my points below, as well as in general.
11. Additionally, recent published research suggests that online discussion forums like Reddit have become important spaces for individuals to share personal experiences and seek support, especially regarding sensitive topics such as abuse. These platforms offer anonymity and community, which can encourage open dialogue and connection among survivors and those seeking advice, such as for emotional support and advice: ⁵ ⁶ ⁷ and storytelling and counter-narratives ⁸, providing important avenues for connection and healing for survivors.
12. **Please note that many forum links reveal often harrowing reports of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, cover-up of the same, family ostracization, suicide ideation, and other triggering themes of events that occurred to people in relations to the SSPX. Reader caution is advised.**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

⁵ Whiting, J., Davies, B., Eisert, B., Witting, A., & Anderson, S. (2022). Online Conversations About Abuse: Responses to IPV Survivors from Support Communities. *Journal of Family Violence*, 1 - 11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-022-00414-5>.

⁶ O'Neill, T. (2018). 'Today I speak': Exploring how victim-survivors use reddit. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 7, 44-59. <https://doi.org/10.5204/IJCJSD.V7I1.402>.

⁷ Simhadri, S., & Ringenberg, T. (2023). Child Sexual Abuse Awareness and Support Seeking on Reddit: A thematic Analysis. *Companion Proceedings of the ACM Web Conference 2023*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3543873.3587363>.

⁸ Davidson, C., Booth, R., Jackson, K., & Mantler, T. (2023). Toxic Relationships Described by People With Breast Cancer on Reddit: Topic Modeling Study. *JMIR Cancer*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.2196/48860>.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

16. [REDACTED]

17. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

⁹ https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/Catholic_Morality/TV-Occasion-of-Sin.htm

¹⁰ https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/Catholic_Morality/Dangers-of-Television.htm

¹¹ <https://isidore.co/misc/Res%20pro%20Deo/Pope%20St.%20Pius%20X%20&%E2%81%84or%20SSPX/The%20Angelus/HTMLs/2788.html>

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

History of the SSPX

23. The Society of St. Pius X (SSPX)¹⁴ is a 'traditionalist' and fundamentalist Catholic fraternal organisation founded in 1970 by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. The group emerged in response to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which Lefebvre and his followers believed departed from traditional Catholic doctrine and practice.
24. The SSPX operates seminaries, schools, and chapels globally, maintaining pre-Vatican II liturgical practices. They reject many of the mainstream Catholic Church's ideology. The organization has been in a complex canonical situation with Rome for decades, most significantly since 1988, when Lefebvre consecrated four bishops without papal approval, leading to automatic excommunication for him and the new bishops under canon law. This created a formal schism between the SSPX and the Catholic Church, though the organization has always maintained it remains Catholic and seeks reconciliation with Rome.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKYpASDtswM>

¹³ https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/Catholic_Morality/Contraception_and_conscience.htm

¹⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Society-of-St-Pius-X>

25. Under Pope Benedict XVI, there were attempts at reconciliation. In 2009, he lifted the excommunications of the four bishops as a gesture of goodwill, though this didn't resolve the underlying doctrinal disagreements. The SSPX was also granted some canonical recognition for marriages and confessions.
26. Pope Francis had continued dialogue efforts while maintaining that full communion requires the SSPX to accept the authority of the Magisterium and Vatican II's teachings. The relationship remains unresolved, with the SSPX maintaining its traditional positions while Rome seeks full acceptance of conciliar teaching.
27. The organization continues to operate globally with seminaries in various countries and a significant following among traditionalist Catholics who prefer pre-conciliar liturgy and theology.

Controversies

28. There have been several international controversies within the SSPX, including, but not limited to, reports and allegations of antisemitism, abuse, sexual abuse, and more¹⁵, including, but not limited to:
29. Holocaust Denial Crisis (2009): The most significant scandal occurred when Bishop Richard Williamson denied the Holocaust in a 2009 television interview, claiming "no more than 200,000 to 300,000 Jews were killed during the Holocaust and that Nazi Germany did not use gas chambers"¹⁶.
30. Sexual Abuse Allegations: The SSPX has faced multiple sexual abuse scandals globally. The SSPX is under investigation in the state of Kansas for alleged sex abuse, along with the four Catholic dioceses¹⁷. This will be explained more fully within my experience, below.
31. Broader Controversies: There have been several controversies surrounding the Society of St. Pius X, many of which concern political support for non-democratic regimes, alleged antisemitism, and the occupation of church buildings¹⁸. This is particularly relevant for Europe.

Behaviors and actions, and methods of control within the SSPX

32. I was 10 years old in 1983 when my parents started attending the SSPX church in [REDACTED] Melbourne. The predominant sexual abuse incidents happened to me at the [REDACTED] church premises, although some incidents happened also in [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] I was the only person within my family to have been sexually abused by a priest within the SSPX.

Psychological control

33. This section provides examples of psychological control particularly in relation to my experience within the SSPX in the 1980's and 1990's in [REDACTED] Victoria.

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Controversies_surrounding_the_Society_of_Saint_Pius_X

¹⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Williamson_\(bishop\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Williamson_(bishop))

¹⁷ <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/45431/sspx-accused-of-intimidating-would-be-whistleblowers-amid-abuse-investigation>

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Controversies_surrounding_the_Society_of_Saint_Pius_X

34. *Psychological manipulation* within the SSPX is well-documented^{19 20 21}, and is both implicit and explicit. It is exerted through a “them and us” attitude, painting people outside the SSPX as ‘bad and going to hell’ and SSPX people ‘following the true faith and on track to heaven’.
35. Whilst I was within the SSPX, I experienced *emotional, mental, and social manipulation* tactics most especially by [REDACTED] a man at the time in his 50’s who use charm and emotional extortion to dominate me. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Within a few weeks of meeting him, I was told repeatedly that he was my ‘spiritual director’, and I was to ‘submit wholly to him and his advice’ in alignment with the Fourth Commandment (obedience)^{22 23} (where to refuse the order of a priest was the most grievous ‘sin’ and would ‘damn’ the person to ‘hell’ for all eternity).
36. It was very difficult, physically and psychologically, to refuse the order of a priest; if anyone saw me refuse [REDACTED] direction, I would have been publicly shamed and [REDACTED] would have given me a beating (which was standard practice if we didn’t obey [REDACTED], or, committed a more grievous sin, to disobey a priest). As he had nominated himself as my “spiritual director,” I had to ‘meet with him for advice’ in one-on-one sessions - in his bedroom at the [REDACTED] church grounds (the priests lived on the church premises at that time). It was there he would force me to sit on his knee, touch me inappropriately and sexually abuse me. From memory, I was approximately 14 or 15 when this started.
37. *Mental manipulation* specifically within my experience included [REDACTED] predominant ‘spiritual direction’, which for me was centered around the 6th and 9th Commandments²⁴ (both focused on virginity and ‘purity’), and I was to be completely and utterly obedient²⁵ to him; as my ‘spiritual director’, he was the ‘expert’ on ‘giving guidance’ on such matters. In the SSPX in general, priests giving guidance to women on ‘being chaste’ and virginity is a common occurrence in the SSPX²⁶ - during my time in the SSPX, the focus on ‘sexual morality’²⁷ was something of a fixation for many priests²⁸, with ‘conjugal chastity’^{29 30} and sexual activity³¹ – within marriage - being a key topic within

¹⁹ <https://youtu.be/3Ezk91snkPE?feature=shared>

²⁰ <https://mediaassets.kshb.com/NWT/Sam/20230106-kbi-clergy-report.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.betroffen.at/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/PKpresstext-englisch.pdf>

²² <https://www.stdennis.ca/news/2017/2/13/true-obedience-the-mark-of-a-faithful-catholic>

²³ https://sspx.au/sites/default/files/documents/The_art_of_Parenting.pdf

²⁴ <http://www.therealpresence.org/essentials/commandments/acc30.htm>

²⁵ <https://fsspx.news/en/news/holiness-church-11-piety-and-obedience-29161>

²⁶ <https://www.kofc.org/un/en/resources/cis/cis128.pdf>

²⁷ https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/Catholic_Morality/Keep_thyself_chaste.htm

²⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AJxsgC_bD0

²⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7k7csNK7gk

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeaxQJdDoTg&list=PLnb8xV4MiSnPZckmBol-sq16yhCQQpxHd>

³¹ <https://www.catechism.cc/articles/marriage-bed.htm>

the SSPX. Propaganda on the topic is explicit, and, at times, almost bordering on soft porn^{32 33}. **Please note that reference 20 here is sexually explicit, and at times offensive.**

38. During confession (explained [here](#) and [here](#)), we [REDACTED] [REDACTED] would be asked if we 'touched ourselves', or if we were 'impure' with anyone, and were expected to give in-depth and explicit details, especially if we were 'confessing' our 'sins' to [REDACTED]. Almost every Sunday, [REDACTED] would come and find me, put his hand on my shoulder and force me into his bedroom. If I tried to avoid him, he'd find me, corner me, stare at me, and beckon me with his finger to go to his bedroom. My heart would sink. I had no choice. It was a mortal sin if I did not go in there and even if I was successful at avoiding him for one week, I knew he would find me the next week, or he would make a surprise visit to our home and verbally express how 'sad' he was that I didn't meet him the previous Sunday. In every session, he reinforced with his repeated statements that it was a mortal sin not to obey him: if he said we had to meet, then I was bound by the 4th commandment to do so, under 'the pain of mortal sin'.
39. [REDACTED] used *emotional manipulation* by making me feel guilty about trying to avoid him. For example, one of the most vivid memories was when [REDACTED] was at our home for lunch not long after we met him and he took [REDACTED] and I for a walk in the bush near our home. He proposed a game of hide and seek, but as we were feeling increasingly uncomfortable with his behaviour, we pretended to play, but we used a bush track so we could run home. Unfortunately, he found us and looked really upset, saying: "You're hurting my feelings by running away. You've made me sad because I'm your friend". Although we were afraid, we felt bad. I was confused because I couldn't understand why I was feeling afraid, but at the same time, feeling bad and guilty for making a priest sad.
40. Later in the day, as soon as my mother left to go and work her usual evening shift (3pm – 11pm) (my father worked from around 8am-4pm so he was not present either), [REDACTED] asked us to walk with him again so he could give us 'spiritual guidance' on "purity and modesty". As soon as we were away from the house, he put his arms around us and his hands were too close to our breasts, so, in order for us to get away from him, I suggested that we "play hide and seek." This time, as we were close to [REDACTED] [REDACTED], I quietly showed [REDACTED] a way up the cliffs and to a hidden track where we ran home, locked ourselves in our room and hid under the bed. Needless to say, we were terrified [REDACTED] would find us, but even more terrified of what he would say, and how sad or angry he'd be because we 'hurt his feelings' – and if he told our parents, they would definitely thrash us for that. After a short while, he came back to our home, searched the house, and found us hiding under [REDACTED] bed. He pulled me out from under the bunk bed, gave us a strong verbal warning, saying we had committed a mortal sin, that we had hurt his feelings and that to do this to a priest was a mortal sin; we would go to hell if we died before confessing our sins (he forced us to confess these 'sins' to him that following Sunday at [REDACTED]).
41. Even more so after this incident, I still tried to avoid [REDACTED] and was really anxious and afraid. His habit of stalking me was truly terrifying, and for many years, I would have nightmares about it, causing long-

³² <https://www.scribd.com/document/23750067/Chastity-A-Guide-for-Teens-and-Young-Adults>

³³ https://youtu.be/_7k7csNK7gk?feature=shared

term insomnia as I was too afraid to fall asleep. I do recall at this time I started to 'rock' back and forth in bed, and in my sleep, where the bunk would bang against the wall. My siblings used to get so angry with me for waking them up, and my mother was so angry that my hair was a huge knot every morning. She would threaten to shave my hair off, which sadly, she never did, much to my dismay! Nevertheless, he always found me: when I'd try to avoid or hide from him (which was futile), he'd tell me that I hurt his feelings by not complying with his demand to 'give me spiritual direction' alone in his bedroom. This created a sense of obligation to comply with his demands and created a crushing sense of guilt I felt at causing him distress. Even today, I still have major anxiety issues when telling someone 'No' or not living up to expectations.

42. In a broader context, in terms of *social manipulation*, since I left the SSPX, I have had social pressure from family, priests and current SSPX people to return to the SSPX, as well as threats of violence and intimidation, especially in relation to reporting my sexual abuse. In terms of the latter, for example, when I told [REDACTED] about my sexual abuse, he threatened me that my 'academic career would be in tatters' if anyone else, or the media ever found out about what happened in the SSPX. As an early career academic at Queensland University of Technology at the time (I have now left QUT)³⁵, I'd just gotten tenure, so I was definitely worried about losing my position at the university. It was only much later that I contacted Victorian SANO Taskforce (thanks to *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*) and began to take action to get [REDACTED] extradited to Australia to face charges. I was also threatened by a member of the SSPX, [REDACTED] that 'my head would be removed from my shoulders if I ever told my story to the media.
43. Intimidation tactics are not new at SSPX, and there is enough evidence to suggest that it is still a SSPX strategy^{36 37 38}. Online forums include [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) show many people seeking mental health assistance for help with feeling intimidated from SSPX 'masses', people, and tactics used. **Please note that many of the comments within these forums can be triggering.**
44. *Social manipulation* by the SSPX includes *creating learned helplessness* through their recruitment and retention strategies. Through *recruitment and targeting* families (such as my own), they prey on the emotionally, socially, or financially vulnerable – often those who are marginalized. Just as they did to my parents, they promote to people a 'safe space,' offering a sense of 'the known':
- The Faith forms strong, public bonds between the members of a community, providing a common source of joy, hope, and beauty in the worship of Jesus Christ in the sacred religion that He established. The Society of Saint Pius X recognizes the importance of frequent social contact between its priests, faithful, and the world at large. Community life, education, and apostolic works are crucial in forming a complete Catholic society. The SSPX, therefore, supports a wide variety of these initiatives, ranging from primary and secondary education to local men's and*

³⁴ <https://www.stac.vic.edu.au/about/college-governance/>

³⁵ <https://www.qut.edu.au/about/our-people/academic-profiles/mb.mcauliffe>

³⁶ <https://news.diocesesutcon.org/news/sspx>

³⁷ <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/45431/sspx-accused-of-intimidating-would-be-whistleblowers-amid-abuse-investigation>

³⁸ <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/7355/html/>

- women's groups to Ignatian retreat centers.... There is something for everyone. We hope you take advantage of these many opportunities to share your life with others" (sspx.org)³⁹ ;
- b. This is what my parents would recall from their childhoods; an 'old-school' Catholicism⁴⁰ with a narrative of 'the good old days'. In terms of *retention strategies*, the SSPX intrinsically offers the 'comfort of familiarity', the 'old' version of Catholicism where power and control is still held through patriarchal and hierarchical⁴¹ ideology. There are numerous forums that discuss this in both a positive and negative light. See [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
45. The SSPX has a similar theory of power and control to the *Marxist Instrumentalist Theory of Media* (MIT) of power and control⁴²; the SSPX drives a narrative and sets a framework where these systems of domination interconnect and reinforce each other through institutional control. Put simply, both SSPX and the MIT have structural parallels in how power and information are organized and controlled (though they serve fundamentally different ideological purposes). For example, in both systems, information flows primarily downward from the SSPX hierarchy, controlling doctrinal interpretation and dissemination. Ironical that the SSPX leaders despise Marx and Marxism most vehemently!
 46. The SSPX maintains its traditional Catholic identity through hierarchical selection, as well as through retention processes. Both employ institutional mechanisms to maintain orthodoxy - the SSPX through religious obedience and doctrinal adherence. The hierarchical structure, combined with the instrumentalist-like power dynamics, can create particular risks for vulnerable individuals who join or remain within the SSPX. The concentrated authority and information control mechanisms can be especially problematic for those in vulnerable circumstances. Examples include:
 - a. **The emotionally vulnerable:** people experiencing grief, trauma, or major life transitions who seek certainty and community, those with anxiety disorders who find comfort in rigid structure and clear hierarchical authority, those struggling with identity issues who may be drawn to the SSPX's strong traditional identity framework, and people with attachment issues who become dependent on the approval and guidance of authority figures. My father would be within this category.
 - b. **Socially Vulnerable Individuals:** socially isolated individuals seeking belonging and community connection, people from broken families seeking a surrogate family structure, immigrants or those feeling culturally displaced who find comfort in traditional practices, and young adults lacking strong social support networks who become heavily dependent on the group for social interaction. My mother would be within this category, for example.
 - c. **The financially vulnerable:** Those struggling economically – usually families with as many as 6-14 children (which is common within, and is [promoted as a strong positive by SSPX](#)), elderly individuals with assets who might be influenced to make significant donations or bequests, and people seeking economic stability through the SSPX schools, businesses, or charitable works.

³⁹ <https://sspx.org/en/united-our-traditional-catholic-faith-30209>

⁴⁰ <https://fsspx.ie/en/fighting-catholic-tradition-33413>

⁴¹ <https://fsspx.org/en/embrace-organized-hierarchy-30290>

⁴² <https://revisesociology.com/2019/08/02/marxist-instrumentalist-theory-media/>

- d. The key concern here is that vulnerable individuals may be less equipped to recognize when the power dynamics become harmful or to advocate effectively for themselves within such a structured system such as the SSPX.
47. The SSPX ideological manipulation is fear-based^{43 44}, a form of control where one is threatened with 'eternal damnation' to those who 'commit sin', and the only 'path to salvation' is through the SSPX⁴⁵. The 'moral certainty' ("safety") where the men are the 'natural leaders' and where women and children submit obediently to the will of men^{46 47}, ensures that those who dare to question, are led to believe that they cannot survive or function independently outside the SSPX.

Behavioral control

48. The SSPX operates *coercive control* masked as religious piety^{48 49}. Through priest's sermons on and about marriage, this message is well reinforced – and on websites within Australia: "...the primary end of marriage is only the procreation and education of children", "...the man naturally presides over the whole family", "...the Apostle teaches: 'Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church.... As the Church is subject to Christ, so wives should be subject in all things to their husbands', 'the woman is as it were the heart, endowed with her own distinct qualities and gifts, so that she may sweetly and effectively arrange everything for the good of the whole domestic group', and 'The authority of the man over the wife'"(sspx.org/au)⁵⁰.
49. Through the SSPX misogynistic propaganda, women are conditioned to believe their greatest virtue is submission—to their husband, to the priests, and to the SSPX hierarchy⁵¹. See [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for online discussions both in support of, and not in support of this. Whether it be domestic violence, verbal abuse, physical abuse, or sexual abuse, it is always reframed as "suffering for the family" or "a cross to bear"^{52 53}. For example, when I reported my sexual abuse to [REDACTED], his immediate response was (his exact words): "What a wonderful gift from God! This cross is his will for you, a gift, as it were, so you can achieve a higher place in heaven."
50. *Isolation* is another key strategy in the SSPX 'toolbox' of control^{54 55} - both isolating people within the SSPX from the world, and vice versa. See [here](#) and [here](#) for online discussions of individual's experiences.

⁴³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFj8ofZoQuo>

⁴⁴ <https://fsspx.ie/en/map-life-lesson-13-35235>

⁴⁵ <https://sspx.au/en/news/act-perfect-contrition-23896>

⁴⁶ <https://sspx.org/en/news/feminine-beauty-and-modesty-part-2-43443>

⁴⁷ <https://catholiccandle.org/2019/12/02/the-role-and-work-that-god-gave-to-woman/>

⁴⁸ <https://sspx.org/en/family-and-education-todays-world-31712>

⁴⁹ <https://fsspx.news/en/news/gifts-holy-ghost-6-gift-piety-45123>

⁵⁰ <https://sspx.au/en/preparatory-schema-marriage-and-family-2-31686>

⁵¹ https://youtu.be/MFGbCbkmwI?si=V9Ye6AvnHfI7_ULY

⁵² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AEIKyug81Y>

⁵³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPpUTblo6FM>

⁵⁴ <https://oklahomavoice.com/2024/07/11/in-this-kansas-town-an-insular-catholic-sect-leaves-some-residents-feeling-left-out/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.mediapart.fr/en/journal/france/230818/catholic-fundamentalists-shadows-frances-far-right>

51. For isolation **outside** the SSPX, an example is when I left the SSPX in 1993, I was not permitted to return to my family home, as I would be a 'bad influence' on my siblings and 'lead them away from the SSPX'. The priests advised my mother and father to keep me away from the family home, unless I would return to the SSPX. It was ironic: after spending all my life wishing with all hope that I could be 'normal' and attend a 'normal' school in [REDACTED], I found myself at 20 years old, homeless, cut off from all relationships with family, friends, or support networks, whilst I was well within that normal world', I had nothing. The severe emotional isolation was suffocating and relentless. Although I was a trainee nurse at the time at the Ballarat Base Hospital, faced with the enormity of re-building my life from scratch, I entered into a toxic relationship which resulted in domestic violence and me having to get police protection, flee to Adelaide, South Australia, to live in a women's shelter until I could find the funds to live on my own. It was during that period that severe suicidal thoughts were on my mind, every single day. My words here cannot adequately convey how difficult my life was at the time, and how fragile my mental health was. In my situation then (almost 30 years ago), there was no access to the internet at home (let alone on your phone), less support for women in such situations, and societal attitudes at that time were that domestic violence was often seen as a private matter. I cannot imagine how challenging it would be for a woman with children to do this, ostracized from all her connections, even in 2025 when systems are now better designed to support vulnerable women. However, no matter what the support systems are, there is nothing that is a short-term fix that can prevent emotional isolation, especially when her whole world – family, friends, community network, home and identity - is ripped away, within weeks or sometimes less (my timeframe was one week between fleeing my marriage in Melbourne under police guard, to being in a woman's shelter in Adelaide).
52. Another example of isolation is **within** the SSPX, and the context of 'bad influence' was all-encompassing, from not allowed to watch television⁵⁶ ⁵⁷, or listen to the radio, and even to attend 'normal' school. To attend a 'normal' school, children were potentially influenced by other children and might be 'led away from the SSPX' and 'into sin.' This isolation leads to gaslighting, emotional manipulation, information control, financial control, threats and intimidation, and most especially for women, creating learned helplessness.
53. *Gaslighting* victims is also a key strategy, as can be seen [here](#) and [here](#). Many victims report that they are required to '[confess](#)' the '[sin](#)' of being abused and this was also my experience. As I'd 'lost my virginity' to [REDACTED], I was required to 'confess' to him; this 'sin' as my 'sin', of being 'impure', a mortal sin against the 6th and 9th commandment - to the very priest who abused me. Another example, when I told the SSPX (specifically [REDACTED]) what [REDACTED] did to me, certain people and priests from [REDACTED] and from [REDACTED] questioned my memories of sexual abuse, claiming it was 'just my perception', or even worse, told me I was insane. [REDACTED] in the U.S., there are decades-old complaints about gaslighting of sexual abuse victims⁵⁸ – and these tactics are widely used at the SSPX church in Victoria, still today.

⁵⁶ https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/Catholic_Morality/Dangers-of-Television.htm

⁵⁷ https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/Catholic_Morality/TV-Occasion-of-Sin.htm

⁵⁸ <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/sspx-abuse-scandal-mainstream-media/>

54. While the sexual abuse was happening regularly (at one point, it was weekly, and occurred over months), [REDACTED] would *emotionally manipulate* me make me feel guilty for ‘rejecting him’ – after all, he was considered popular and charismatic to the parish, and there were few people who didn’t like him. The shame that I still feel today from my own sexual abuse is very real, and to date, even reading my own police statement is almost impossible. I also recall after my brother was killed in a road traffic accident, at the funeral, one of the priests tried to manipulate me to ‘return to the SSPX flock’ so my ‘parents would know that when I die, I would be with my brother in heaven’ but if I did not, my ‘parents would be sad knowing that when I die, I’ll be burning in hell forever’. Interesting to note that this conversation was at my brother’s funeral wake, at the [REDACTED] where the priest was also visibly well under the influence of alcohol.

Information control

55. The *information control* within the SSPX is measured, consistent, and tightly controlled by the priests and those in SSPX leadership (not a coincidence that said leaders are all male). As stated above, the SSPX and the *Marxist Instrumentalist Theory of Media* share the same principles: both share a deep suspicion toward mainstream media. From the (1) critique of mainstream media (both view dominant media as serving the interests of elites rather than truth or the common good), (2) the suspicion of liberal institutions (both are deeply sceptical of liberal democratic institutions and mainstream cultural narratives), (3) the counter-hegemonic positioning (both position themselves as offering alternative perspectives that challenge the dominant discourse), (4) the concern about ideological manipulation (both argue that mainstream media promotes false consciousness) to (5) media as propaganda tool (both see mainstream media as actively working to promote a particular worldview rather than neutral information). These five aspects are driven emphatically and systematically, from YouTube channels, social media (Facebook and Reddit), books and magazines, to those seeking medical advice, media access, educational material and more. Those within the SSPX community are told what they can watch and read and are encouraged to only consume SSPX material as much as possible⁵⁹ and that ‘modern material is “trash”⁶⁰, with social media being even ‘spiritually dangerous’^{61 62 63}. On the website *Should One Ban and Burn Books?* “The purpose of the Index was to safeguard the minds of the faithful” and books that Catholics should not read include:

- 1) “Non-Catholic translations or versions of the Sacred Scriptures.
- 2) Any books that defend heresy or schism.
- 3) Any books that attack faith or morals.
- 4) Books of non-Catholics on religion, unless they contain nothing contrary to the Catholic Faith.
- 5) Books published without ecclesiastical approval that comment on Sacred Scripture, or those which contain new unapproved apparitions, revelations, prophecies, or devotions.
- 6) Books which ridicule Catholic dogma or defend errors denounced by the Holy See.

⁵⁹ <https://sspx.org/en/news/feminine-beauty-and-modesty-part-2-43443>

⁶⁰ <https://isidore.co/misc/Res%20pro%20Deo/Pope%20St.%20Pius%20X%20&%E2%81%84or%20SSPX/The%20Angelus/HTMLs/2706.html>

⁶¹ <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2020/04/30/social-media-and-spiritual-dangers-for-catholics-today/>

⁶² <https://fatima.org/news-views/catholic-apologetics-128/>

⁶³ <https://sspx.org/en/pascendi-exposes-modernist-tactics-30350>

- 7) Books that teach superstition, fortune telling, magic, or occult practices.
- 8) Books which support or approve of duels, suicide, divorce, freemasonry, or any other secret society.
- 9) Books which teach or describe lewd matters, including birth control.
- 10) Liturgical books containing unapproved changes to the Rites.
- 11) Books which contain apocryphal indulgences or those which have been revoked by the Holy See.
- 12) Any images of Our Lord, Our Lady, or the saints that are not in accordance with the sentiments and decrees of the Church”⁶⁴.

Financial control

56. In terms of *financial control*, whilst there is no evidence that the SSPX does not exert **explicit** financial control, their misogynistic and somewhat antiquated assigned ‘gender roles’ **implicitly** create financial control, most especially affecting vulnerable women. The SSPX follow traditional Catholic teachings that position the husband as the primary financial provider, and that women’s role is within the home as the mother and ‘home maker’, or what is now popularized as a ‘trad wife’. Whilst being a ‘trad wife’ is not necessarily a negative point here, within the SSPX, religious obligation versus personal choice transforms what might be a lifestyle preference into a moral imperative - traditional gender roles are presented as God's will rather than personal preference, where questioning or changing course can feel like spiritual failure, creating additional psychological pressure and guilt. Specifically in terms of financial control, if the husband is the only person earning money, economic vulnerability is the most significant concern. Complete financial dependence on a partner creates serious risks if the relationship ends through divorce, death, or abandonment. Without recent (or any) work experience or maintained professional skills, entering or re-entering the workforce can be extremely challenging, often forcing acceptance of lower-paying positions.
57. Another aspect of *implicit* financial control is that, within the SSPX, women are not generally encouraged to advance their education after high school, forge a career, or work regularly ‘[outside the home](#)’, as the ‘primary outcome of marriage is children’⁶⁵. This creates economic dependency, and the inability for women to have financial autonomy; compared to mainstream society, in the SSPX women's financial autonomy is significantly limited. For women to have financial autonomy, they need be able to earn money through decent work, but often, they need training or further education. Additionally, the financial cost of accessing further training or higher education is significant. Unfortunately, misogyny within SSPX is widespread, and whilst there are some men who hold more radicalized views about women attending university⁶⁶, some previous SSPX leaders have openly held the opinion that:
 - i. ... if a girl devotes several years of her youth and much money of her parents to acquiring a university education, especially a decent one, how easily will she submit to her husband, especially if he has not had that education? And how may she not argue with him if he has

⁶⁴ <https://fatima.org/news-views/catholic-apologetics-128/>

⁶⁵ <https://sspx.au/en/preparatory-schema-marriage-and-family-2-31686>

⁶⁶ https://www.reddit.com/r/TraditionalCatholics/comments/wpmbbb/girls_at_university_bishop_williamson/?rdt=33354

had it? And if she has a "degree", how will she not think herself above the multiple humiliations of being "barefoot and pregnant"? And if she is a "graduate", how will she not hold-herself superior to being-a "vegetable at the-kitchen-sink"? And if making a family makes her forget in the right kind of way all about "graduating", "degrees" and "university", why go there in the first place? The dilemma is inescapable: in doing manly things like going to a university, either she is merely going through the motions or she is damaging her potential for motherhood - conclusion: she should not go there⁶⁷.

58. *Financial control* is also used in terms of 'buying silence,' such as in my case, where [REDACTED] paid for my tuition fees at [REDACTED] in the U.S., in return for my silence. After a particularly difficult 'spiritual guidance session,' I had rebelled the following week and refused to go into his bedroom again. [REDACTED] took me aside a few weeks later and impressed on me about how I'd "grievously hurt" his feelings and how I had committed "mortal sins of grave disobedience": he said I needed the spiritual guidance of the [REDACTED] nuns to 'become a lady'; he would pay my tuition fees 'out of the goodness of his heart' because he 'loved me as a man should do to a woman' and this was "our little secret". Yes, I wanted to be 'normal,' to go to school, but I did feel trapped. What was I to do? Stay and put up with sexual abuse? Or take the money and be silent? I took the latter option; as a 15-year-old, there really was no way out of the cycle, since my parents supported the SSPX wholeheartedly and financially, and [REDACTED] was supported by his superiors. Even when his niece, [REDACTED] accused him of sexual assault and filed a report [REDACTED], he was still permitted to remain as parish priest at [REDACTED]. She was forced to retract her statement a few months later by [REDACTED] supporters. [REDACTED]

Emotional/spiritual exploitation

59. The SSPX weaponizes spiritual authority, a distortion and exploitation of spiritual authority to manipulate, control, use, or harm people both within, and external to the group, mostly through shame and fear (as I've outlined above, and more can be seen [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Specifically, within the SSPX contexts, this is manifested through SSPX's traditionalist stance which creates multiple layers of fear through theological intimidation:
- a) Using "mortal sin" threats to make people be obedient^{68 69}, thus controlling behaviour and silencing victims, such as in my situation outlined above.
 - b) Claiming [exclusive access to salvation through SSPX practices](#). Both at [REDACTED] and at [REDACTED], there is no salvation outside the Church (*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*)^{70 71}: those [outside the SSPX are 'bound for hell'](#) and there is [no way for salvation outside the SSPX](#).
 - c) Positioning questioning of authority as spiritually dangerous⁷². In SSPX teachings, disobedience to a legitimate superior within their sphere of authority is considered a mortal sin because it is seen as going against the love of God and neighbor. Ironically, the SSPX legitimize their 'disobedience'

⁶⁷ <https://web.archive.org/web/20071102091508/http://www.sspc.ca/Documents/Bishop-Williamson/September1-2001.htm>

⁶⁸ <https://sspx.ca/en/news/true-obedience-mark-faithful-catholic-8344>

⁶⁹ <https://ontario.sspc.ca/en/publications/public-sinners-39375>

⁷⁰ <https://youtu.be/Lyol1sTLpfk?feature=shared>

⁷¹ https://www.sspcasia.com/Documents/Catholic_Doctrine/Is-there-no-salvation-outside-the-Catholic-Church.htm

⁷² <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3105.htm>

when Marcel Lefebvre ordained four bishops in 1988, resulting in excommunication⁷³, yet to disobey a priest is a mortal sin⁷⁴.

- d) Creating fear of eternal damnation for non-compliance⁷⁵. In fact, some priests are far more forthright on this matter, such as [REDACTED], who preaches “Believe, or be condemned”⁷⁶.
- e) The [SSPX-driven fear of ‘modern’ Catholicism](#) as ‘spiritually dangerous’, fear of secular society as ‘corrupting’, fear of questioning traditional interpretations as sinful, and fear of leaving the group as spiritual suicide is all pervasive: “SSPX priests advise against going to a Novus Ordo Mass in all places and circumstances, because it presents a grave danger”⁷⁷. This creates a sense of ‘salvation anxiety’ especially those who need to leave a marriage or for their own safety, but due to the emotional and spiritual manipulation, [many experience an intense anxiety](#) about their spiritual state, with SSPX positioning itself as the only reliable path to salvation, creating psychological dependency. I have experienced this myself, and indeed, my parents disowned me because they were afraid of the consequences for their own ‘souls’ if they supported their own daughter, with the priests also ordering my parents to disown me because I’d left the SSPX.

Sexual and physical abuse

60. Whilst I had made a statement with the Victorian Police and my case was taken to Victorian SANO to extradite [REDACTED] to Australia, the case could not continue as [REDACTED] was terminally ill. Although the Victorian SANO Department did consider my case to be strong, and initially approved the extradition, just before it was meant to happen, the police in the U.S. contacted SANO and advised that [REDACTED] was considered too ill to fly from the U.S. to Australia, and so the case was closed with no resolution. However, even though there is no evidence from my case, there is a long and sustained history of sexual and physical abuse within the SSPX. Here are some of cases that are recorded against SSPX priests worldwide – from NZ, US, South Africa, Europe and more.

1. <https://californiasexabuselawyers.com/catholic-priests/benedict-van-der-putten/>
2. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt19884418/>
3. <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/09/03/predatory-behavior-priest-sex-abuse-report-reveals-secret-bay-area-case/>
4. <https://www.adamhorowitzlaw.com/blog/2019/03/fr-benedict-van-der-putten-diocese-of-scranton/>
5. <https://stellamaris.media/f/sspx-sued-for-fraud-breaking-up-family-read-the-lawsuit>
6. <https://archive.news.stv.tv/north/1428186-monks-who-sheltered-child-abuse-priest-unaware-of-allegations.html>
7. <https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=61923>
8. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/257342/society-of-st-pius-x-priest-admits-to-years-of-sexual-misconduct-with-minors>
9. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/133521403/second-person-joins-settlement-case-against-whanganui-society-of-saint-pius-x>
10. <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/lefebvrists-accused-of-sex-abuse-and-its-cover-up-in-africa/16696>
11. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/05/catholic-sspx-resistance-uk-harbours-clergy-accused-sexual-abuse-richard-williamson>
12. <https://www.cjonline.com/story/news/state/2023/01/07/church-abuse-investigation-finds-188-kansas-priests-committed-crimes/69786626007/>
13. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/519994202127538/posts/1713274342799512/>

⁷³ <https://sspx.org/en/can-obedience-oblige-us-disobey-30348>

⁷⁴ https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/SiSiNoNo/1996_November/To_Apostasy_by_way_of_Obedience.htm

⁷⁵ <https://sspx.news/en/news/holiness-church-11-piety-and-obedience-29161>

⁷⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mg-vUR4sk0A>

⁷⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgCv5Rohu24>

14. <https://www.laprovence.com/article/faits-divers-justice/48322615791546/un-prete-traditionnaliste-suspecte-davoir-touche-le-sexe-de-sept-enfants-dans-les-hautes-alpes>
15. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/519994202127538/posts/1839820320144913/>
16. <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/hatewatch/former-seminarian-anti-semitic-church-charged-sexual-abuse-boys/>

61. It cannot be denied that the SSPX have admitted⁷⁸ that there is an issue of abuse within its churches (at least within the US) do have a process of dealing with sexual abuse, but it is within the U.S. only at this point⁷⁹, but if it is “...[D]eeply distressed by this affair, the Society of Saint Pius X reaffirms its unwavering determination to do everything in its power to prevent the tragedy of pedophilia, and in particularly where priests are concerned”⁸⁰ why has it taken so long for SSPX to address these issues? Why is there no option for people within Australia to report incidences of abuse? Why would they only “If sexual abuse, the person accused will be removed from duty immediately” and not report the matter to police? And, especially in my case, why do they only investigate priests who are *currently* within the SSPX? What is also concerning is that as the investigative team “...include[s] a religious sister, canon lawyer, psychologist, attorney, retired FBI agent, and traditional Catholic married couple” meaning there is little to no external people involved. How could the victim be assured that there would be no bias, or worse, retribution from the SSPX?

62. There are numerous priests who abused victims while they were within the SSPX, but often, the victim takes years to have the courage to report it. By then, the priest has been moved on, and this is certainly the case with a number of cases (ref. links above). Furthermore:

*If a priest has an active allegation against them, are they automatically removed from their office? Everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty following an administrative or judicial penal process. Should it be deemed necessary to avoid scandal, protect witnesses, or restore justice, the SSPX U.S. District Superior may place precautionary restrictions on the accused, including the prohibition from exercising sacred ministry or from exercising his office during the pendency of the investigation. In view of the presumption of innocence, every effort must be made to protect the good name of the accused during the investigation*⁸¹.

Surely, “avoiding scandal” is less important than the victim or placing others in danger for the person to potential re-offend?

63. While this next point regards ██████████ in Kansas U.S., it still directly involves priests who have spent time at ██████████, such as ██████████. Recently, serious allegations of abuse surfaced, and extensive information regarding him, and SSPX priests in Kansas has been investigated by the authorities. It was reported by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KIB) that boys at ██████████ were sexually abused under his leadership, with at least one suicide linked to this abuse⁸². In the investigation, the KIB task force

⁷⁸ <https://www.complicitclergy.com/2020/05/06/sspx-admits-abuse/>

⁷⁹ <https://apr.ssp.org/en/what-happens-when-formal-allegation-made-43368>

⁸⁰ <https://sspx.org/en/news/communique-society-saint-pius-x-44179>

⁸¹ <https://apr.ssp.org/en/frequently-asked-questions-35632>

⁸² <https://www.kansascity.com/news/state/kansas/article242572821.html>

...received and reviewed 41,265 pages of records, received and reviewed 224 tips, interviewed 137 victims of abuse, initiated 125 criminal cases and distributed 30 charging affidavits to the appropriate prosecutors for charging consideration. To date, no prosecutor has filed charges, primarily due to statute of limitations concerns. Our investigations identified 188 clergy members suspected of committing various criminal acts, to include: aggravated criminal sodomy, rape, aggravated indecent liberties with a child and aggravated sexual battery”⁸³.

64. Is it not a fair question to pose why SSPX has been permitted to operate freely and have schools that are unrestricted within Australia – one of the strictest health and safety conscious nations in the world? Surely, the worldwide **proven** scandals and cases must indicate that there are significant issues of at least child safety within the SPPX. One would be supremely naïve to assume that these issues only occur in SSPX parishes, schools and groups outside Australia.
65. I reported my abuse to the recent *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*⁸⁴ and although the final report does not mention [REDACTED], it does mention The Society of Saint Pius X in its Religious Institutions (Book 2) examined within the Royal Commission. So why, after all these years, and after a Royal Commission, is the SSPX allowed to operate without any scrutiny from the Victorian authorities, at the very minimum?
66. The global structure and interconnectivity of SSPX institutions allow allegations to be buried and/or priests to transferred rather than addressed. [REDACTED] was moved from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Kansas, U.S., when allegations of him sexually abusing a 15-year-old altar boy were reported. It was there that he sodomized a young altar boy who later took his own life⁸⁵. From there, he was moved to Ireland, where more reports of sexual abuse and assault of boys surfaced, and now he is still within the SSPX in Italy. Another example was [REDACTED], who was moved on from [REDACTED] when reports of him being inappropriate with young women surfaced (as well as the police statement from his niece who he assaulted), and he was sent to India for some time. From there, he came back to Australia for some time, then returned to the U.S. He was eventually asked to leave the SSPX after a number of reports and eye-witness accounts of theft, burglary, DUI and sexual assaults. He has a lengthy public police record in the U.S.
67. In New Zealand, individuals are now coming forward with allegations that [REDACTED] – on the School Board of the SSPX school in [REDACTED]⁸⁶ - covered up the sexual assault of young boys by another priest who was in the same church, [REDACTED]. Rather than investigate or report these claims, it is alleged that [REDACTED] enabled the concealment of abuse⁸⁷.

⁸³ <https://mediaassets.kshb.com/NWT/Sam/20230106-kbi-clergy-report.pdf>

⁸⁴ <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/religious-institutions>

⁸⁵ <https://www.kansascity.com/news/state/kansas/article242587896.html>

⁸⁶ <https://www.stac.vic.edu.au/about/college-governance/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.thepost.co.nz/nz-news/350142384/new-sexual-abuse-allegations-resurface-old-pain-victims-fundamentalist-church>

68. Across borders, countries and continents, there is a long and public history of a systemic pattern of cover up of sexual and other abuse within the SSPX, where priests facing serious allegations are relocated rather than held accountable^{88 89 90 91}. **This reinforces the urgent need for international cooperation and oversight mechanisms to ensure abuse cannot simply be moved across borders or institutions.**
69. In summary, there is a *plethora of evidence* that demonstrates that the SSPX uses psychological control to recruit and retain their followers. In fact, there is a direct correlation between power, control and manipulation⁹², not dissimilar to situations of gender-based violence and power imbalance on vulnerable people ⁹³.

Short and long-term impacts

Psychological Impacts on Individuals

70. As detailed above, lived experiences from time within the SSPX have had a significant impact on myself and the people I still know. From people at [REDACTED], to women and children in [REDACTED] today, we have all suffered and continue to suffer the consequences of the SSPX and its ideology. I was taught not to complain, nor to have 'self-pity', but the chronic guilt and shame of my sexual abuse still haunts me today. The long-term psychological impacts of [abuse, sexual abuse and experiences within the SSPX](#) are profound and multifaceted for many individuals. Severe trust and intimacy issues from SSPX control, manipulation and the [obsession around virginity](#)⁹⁴, [modesty](#) and subjugation of women to men, prevent many from maintaining healthy relationships. This is also my own experience with partners and my family, and led to my decision not to have children - a choice I felt was necessary due to my damaged sense of self-worth: how could I be a good mother if I didn't know what good parenting was?
71. One of the strongest things I recall from my childhood was at the time that the abuse started, I visualized this 'bubble' around me. It was there, day and night, until I was around 30 years old. A few months ago, I researched and discovered that it is called a "protective bubble visualization", a well-documented psychological phenomenon in trauma literature⁹⁵. In clinical terms, this falls under "dissociative protective mechanisms"^{96 97} or what some researchers call "psychological shielding". Research on the topic theorizes that dissociation is a psychobiological state or trait that functions as a protective response to traumatic or overwhelming experiences⁹⁸. This would make sense with what the counsellor at the Royal Commission told me after my hearing (but I did not understand it at the

⁸⁸ <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt19884378/>

⁸⁹ <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/granskning/ug/new-cover-ups-of-assaults-by-catholic-priests>

⁹⁰ <https://news.diocesetucson.org/news/sspx>

⁹¹ <https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2017/04/report-charges-cover-traditionalist-society>

⁹² <https://www.thehotline.org/identify-abuse/power-and-control/>

⁹³ <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/policy-and-practice-papers/understanding-spiritual-and-religious-abuse-context-intimate>

⁹⁴ https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/Society_of_Saint_Pius_X/Vocations/Sacra-Virginitas.htm

⁹⁵ https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-19-3175-8_2

⁹⁶ <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/dissociative-defense-mechanism#as-a-defense-mechanism>

⁹⁷ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/ejpt.v6.27905>

⁹⁸ https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/static-page/down_bethesda.html

time): that the abovementioned symptoms are consistent with complex trauma, including dissociative coping mechanisms⁹⁹, hypervigilance (such as me hiding to avoid [REDACTED]), and emotional numbing. To be honest, I didn't want to label myself as having 'trauma' or being a 'victim': it would have made the issue more 'real', **too** 'real'. Denial? Fear of reality? Absolutely, emphatically yes.

72. The abuse and impact from the SSPX have created a persistent belief that I am "not good enough," which has undermined my personal and professional confidence despite my achievements; I still feel a sense of deep-seated shame and inadequacy, despite people seeing me as accomplished and even intelligent. When my mother cut me off (at the SSPX priests' advice), it sent me a profound message that her love was conditional – I was only acceptable when I conformed with her SSPX beliefs; that she protected the priests over me, meaning that I wasn't worthy of protection or love. This advice from the SSPX priests was profoundly harmful and represents multiple forms of spiritual and psychological abuse. Their actions were so damaging because it:
- a. Weaponized family bonds: The priests manipulated one of the most fundamental human relationships - the mother-child bond - as a tool of religious control, essentially weaponizing my mother's love against me, corrupting something that should be unconditional, into conditional compliance.
 - b. Destroying family systems: By advising family severance, they fractured the natural support system I needed most during my domestic violent marriage. This isolation made me more psychologically vulnerable and less likely to successfully integrate into mainstream society - possibly their intended effect, to ensure my failure in 'the real world' so I would return to the SSPX.
 - c. Spiritual manipulation: They positioned themselves as moral authorities to override natural parental instincts. My mother was manipulated into believing she was being "obedient to God" when she was actually being obedient to SSPX control.
 - d. Creating a false moral framework: Labelling me a "bad influence" for leaving reframed my healing journey and independence as 'moral failure'. This is particularly insidious given the sexual abuse within their system - they essentially punished me for seeking safety.
 - e. Perpetuating abuse cycles: By isolating me after I had already been sexually abused by their priest, they compounded the trauma. This mirrors classic abuser tactics of isolating victims to prevent exposure and accountability.
 - f. Exploiting parental fears: They manipulated my mother's natural desire to protect her other children, twisting it into a tool of control. Parents naturally fear losing children, and the priests exploited this vulnerability.
 - g. Institutional self-preservation: This advice served the SSPX's interests, not my family's. By making leaving extremely (emotionally) costly, they deterred others from questioning or departing. The SSPX priests essentially held my family relationships hostage to maintain religious compliance - a form of spiritual terrorism that caused immeasurable psychological damage to everyone involved.
73. The priests' advice to ostracize me created a devastating psychological trap that directly feeds feelings of not being "good enough", meaning:
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- a. I was punished for seeking safety: I fundamentally left the SSPX to protect myself, but instead of the SSPX taking responsibility, they made *me* the problem. The message was clear: "You're so fundamentally flawed that even seeking healing makes you dangerous."
 - b. My existence became the threat: By labelling me a "bad influence" simply for leaving, they essentially said my very presence - not any specific behaviour - was corrupting. This attacked my core sense of self-worth. I was not rejected for what I did, but for who I became when I chose healing over compliance.
 - c. The timing amplified the damage: At 20, I was in a crucial developmental stage where I needed to feel worthy of love and acceptance as an adult. Instead, through my ostracization I learned that seeking independence - was so unacceptable I had to be completely cut off.
 - d. The religious framework made it feel absolute: This was not just family rejection - it was presented as divine judgment. I was not just "not good enough" for my family, but apparently not good enough for God either. No heaven for me!
 - e. The "good enough" trap was impossible to escape:
 - i. Stay and endure abuse = I am "good", but I must suffer (my mother told me that I should "offer up my DV as a 'sacrifice' for my 'sins' of marrying outside the SSPX)
 - ii. Leave and heal = I am "bad" and lose everyone – which happened.
 - iii. There was literally no path where I could be both safe AND acceptable to my mother or the SSPX
 - f. My mother's compliance confirmed the verdict: When my mother followed their advice, it felt like even she agreed I was not worth fighting for. Essentially, she abandoned me when I needed her the most – and worse, she chose the SSPX. The person who should love me unconditionally chose the SSPX over me, confirming that me that I truly was not "good enough" to keep. This particular point still breaks me today; in writing this particularly difficult sentence, my heart breaks as much as it did the day my mother disowned me. It is this point in particular that was the pivotal reason I chose not to have children. What if I did this to my own child one day? What if I ruined my child's life like my mother had done to me? No, I have never forgiven my mother, even although a 'good daughter should forgive and forget'.
74. The priests programmed me to believe that choosing my own wellbeing over their control made me fundamentally unworthy of love – my feelings of not 'being good enough'. That is a lie designed to keep people trapped, but when you hear it from religious authorities and see it enforced by my own mother, it becomes an internalized truth that is incredibly hard to shake.
75. The institutional betrayal that many experience in and from the SSPX where SSPX authorities prioritize protecting their own organisation and priests over seeking justice compounds trauma with additional layers of trauma. In my own life, my estrangement from my family when I left the SSPX meant losing the opportunity to have a relationship with my now-deceased brother ([REDACTED]). The one and only time I saw him as an adult was when I saw him in his coffin at the funeral home, prior to his burial.

76. In my case, the combination of individual sexual trauma and systemic religious abuse has created a complex web of psychological damage affecting my identity, relationships, career aspirations, family connections, and fundamental sense of safety and worth in the world, while also disrupting my spiritual and religious identity that was central to my upbringing. However, I am but one person out of hundreds of victims who have suffered from being associated with the SSPX. People I know from [REDACTED] who are now living at [REDACTED] are suffering emotional, psychological, social and financial trauma at the mercy of the SSPX. One friend who has left the SSPX but has several children (one of who lived with her father who has deeply radicalized SSPX beliefs), continues to suffer from being in the SSPX – now two generations of people negatively impacted by the SSPX. Whilst I can only speak of my own psychological impact, I am certain that my story is like many others who have tried to leave the SSPX.

Social Development Impacts

77. The long-term social development impacts on people such as myself are devastating and far-reaching, fundamentally disrupting the ability to form and maintain healthy social connections across all spheres of life. For example, my childhood trauma occurred during critical developmental years (age 12-16) when I should have been learning healthy social and romantic relationships, but instead being constantly angry, withdrawn, and later engaging in risky behaviors such as smoking and drinking, perhaps maladaptive coping patterns.

78. For women such as me, abuse and childhood sexual abuse (which unfortunately is [not uncommon](#)) particularly impacts sexual and romantic development. For example, until I met my second husband at 32, I was never successful in relationships, with many not lasting more than 18 months. Within all my relationships, including my current marriage, I have ongoing sexual issues (my husband is supportive and understanding), preventing me from experiencing normal intimate partnerships and ultimately leading to my decision to not have children.

79. Social isolation compounded by the insular nature of the SSPX community is not healthy for developing important social skills, such learning to interact with others, form healthy relationships, and understand social norms. People who attended SSPX describe their [trauma](#) and experiences [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Key aspects of living within the 'bubble' of SSPX means that emotional regulation, social skills such as sharing and cooperation, empathy, and the development of self-esteem, are missing. The skills crucial for building positive relationships and navigating social situations throughout life are not formed or strengthened¹⁰¹. Being homeschooled with limited contact with people outside the SSPX and allowing the priests into family homes (sometimes unsupervised), created social isolation, limited exposure to diverse perspectives, and difficulties adapting to mainstream social settings once an adult.

80. This social isolation is even more challenging when leaving the SSPX and [leaves the person in a vulnerable situation](#) – psychologically, financially and physically. When leaving the SSPX, many face severe social punishment and [alienation](#) through friends and family ostracism ([common within the](#)

¹⁰¹ <https://www.unishanoi.org/about/calendar-news-and-publications/post-default/~board/news/post/social-development-in-early-childhood>

[SSPX](#)). For me, it was made even more devastating at the loss of being unable to see or have a relationship with my brother before he died. This meant that I learned to expect betrayal and abandonment from those closest to me, leading to developing protective but ultimately isolating social defenses that prevent authentic connection and vulnerability in relationships throughout my adult life. Being excluded from all contact with family and friends is not uncommon^{102 103} and people's [experiences](#) are traumatizing, although these experiences are not common knowledge within mainstream society and media – most people have never heard of the SSPX. Throughout my life, I have discovered the hard way that society is, as a general rule, not accepting of people, most especially women, not having a good relationship with their mother. Hence this is why, when women leave the SSPX, we rarely have the courage to speak about our experiences. Therefore, I am grateful to the Victorian Government for allowing me to use my voice now.

Developmental Impacts – Children and Youth

81. Although my experience is [not the only case](#) of child and youth developmental disruption within the SSPX, I feel that in this section, it is important to speak of my own lived experience as I am not at all an expert in childhood development. I fear that if I spoke to others here, I may be incorrect and make erroneous assumptions about what is 'normal' childhood and youth development.
82. The sexual abuse and SSPX environment created a perfect storm of *developmental disruption across cognitive, social, and identity domains* during my critical formative years. Cognitively, my intellectual development was severely constrained by the SSPX's authoritarian structure that demanded absolute obedience to religious authority - [REDACTED] explicitly told me "whatever I tell you to do you must obey, according to the fourth commandment", effectively shutting down any critical thinking or questioning that might have protected me from abuse, while the homeschooling environment limited my exposure to alternative perspectives that could have helped me recognize the abuse as wrong rather than religiously mandated.
83. Socially, my *development was profoundly stunted by isolation* from mainstream peers. As stated above, where we lived meant that we did not have much contact with non-SSPX people (including our extended family). This lack of social connection with anyone outside the SSPX insular religious community (where priests were the only regular visitors to our farm) prevented me from developing normal social skills, age-appropriate boundaries, or healthy relationships with peers who might have provided protective factors or alternative social models.
84. The abuse itself derailed my *natural social progression*, as I moved from being a happy and compliant 12-year-old to rebellious behavior just before attending [REDACTED]. I admit here: I was desperate to be seen as 'normal' and not a 'weirdo', so around 15 years old, I would sneak out of the farm and ride my horse to meet up with a few local neighbors' boys where not known to be the most 'genteel' young men of the district. This pattern of behaviour meant that my social development became chaotic and risk-seeking rather than following normal adolescent patterns (not that I knew what 'normal' meant at that time!).

¹⁰² https://www.reddit.com/r/ExTraditionalCatholic/comments/o0stvr/all_ssp_x_escap_ees_tell_us_your_stories_here/

¹⁰³ https://www.reddit.com/r/ExTraditionalCatholic/comments/16ddupl/sspx_experiencestill_struggling/

85. In terms of *identity development*, my sense of self became inextricably entangled with religious trauma and shame – I have felt ‘not good enough’ for years. Personally, I realized a number of years ago that I have been desperate for my mother to tell me she is proud of me (with her now 81 years old, that is now highly unlikely to happen!). Even after being the first person in my family tree to have academic qualifications, and qualifications and academic positions at the Universities of Melbourne, Oxford and Cambridge, I am still unable to make her proud of me. However, no amount of wishing for something makes it happen.
86. Overall, these experiences indicate that my *core identity formation* was hijacked by trauma and religious control, preventing the normal adolescent process of identity exploration and self-determination, ultimately leaving me unable to separate myself from the damaged identity imposed by abuse and religious manipulation.

Cognitive Development Impacts

87. When in the SSPX, *cognitive and intellectual development* is often severely constrained by the SSPX's authoritarian structure that demands absolute obedience to religious authority, effectively shutting down any critical thinking or questioning that might protect women and children from abuse. For me, the homeschooling environment limited my exposure to alternative perspectives that could have helped me recognize the abuse as wrong rather than religiously mandated. It restricted my intellectual development by limiting exposure to alternative viewpoints, scientific reasoning, or educational frameworks that could have better suited me, to tool me up for success as an adult. Additionally, as I was not taught sex education (the SSPX is dismissive of sex education in schooling)¹⁰⁴ this left me vulnerable to exploitation. █████ manipulation that disobedience to religious authority was a ‘mortal sin’ effectively conditioned me to *suppress any questioning or analytical thinking* that might have helped me recognize the abuse as wrong, instead training me to override my own perceptions and gut instincts in favor of external religious authority.
88. In terms of *identity development*, my sense of self became inextricably entangled with religious trauma and shame, preventing the normal adolescent process of identity exploration and self-determination, ultimately leaving me unable to separate my authentic self from the damaged identity imposed by abuse and religious manipulation. For example, when I left the SSPX, I experienced around a decade of gender identity confusion, unsure what ‘category’ I was within: gay, bi, or straight? My relationships were a constant ‘train wreck’, with no intimate satisfaction. This led to self-loathing and self-hate, knowing how the SSPX believes about LBGTQI+ people, which led me to almost suicide on a number of occasions. I was the ‘hot mess – but without the ‘hot’! The combined trauma of sexual abuse and extreme SSPX religious conditioning (as described above in detail) during formative years creates a *profoundly damaged self-identity* rooted in sexual shame and moral perfectionism that continues to define adult lives, such as in my case.
89. Within the SSPX, the context and environment is created where emotional, psychological and physical [abuse](#) often occurs within a [religious framework](#) that pathologizes normal human sexuality, with

¹⁰⁴ <https://ontario.sspcx.ca/en/publications/sex-education-39154>

priests manipulating women and girls, especially, through distorted teachings about the sixth and ninth commandments, while simultaneously violating them, creating deep confusion and shame about their own bodies and natural desires. These persist into adulthood – evidenced in my own experience.

90. The SSPX's doctrine of absolute obedience to religious authority instils an impossible standard of 'moral perfectionism' that leaves girls and women feeling less visible, or even invisible, there merely to procreate or, if the woman can't, her options a few; be a nun or be a 'failure as a woman'. Women and girls in the SSPX are constantly surveilled under the guise of religious expectations – what to wear, how to act and, more importantly, to obey men ¹⁰⁵. Women and girls are to be compliant, silent, and modest; this is the 'ultimate woman' identity. A woman having her own identity and voice results in shaming, exclusion, or gaslighting¹⁰⁶. From childhood, girls are taught that their role is to serve and obey ¹⁰⁷; personal boundaries, body choices and autonomy are considered 'non-Catholic'. We are constantly reminded about the importance of virginity ^{108 109}, stemming from deeply rooted patriarchal and religious traditions that have historically tied women's moral worth to sexual purity, while rarely applying the same standards to men – and this is indeed true for the SSPX, as evidenced above. Women's lack of autonomy over their bodies and the choices they make (including taking contraception¹¹⁰) is a predominant ideology that is constantly reinforced.
91. This moral perfectionism manifests as persistent self-condemnation and an inability to accept normal human limitations. In my case, the sexual abuse within this morally rigid environment created a toxic fusion where natural human impulses became sources of self-hatred and spiritual terror, while the fear of disappointing religious authorities became so deeply ingrained that even decades later, my core identity remained defined by chronic inadequacy, sexual shame, and the belief that I was fundamentally unworthy of love, intimacy, or familial belonging.

Conclusion

92. My life journey has been a challenge, during and after my time in the SSPX. I am fortunate that I am present to make this submission; there were many days when I was almost certain that I would never see my 30's. However, there are so many individuals who have not survived their experiences at SSPX. Therefore, it is my sincere and heartfelt request that, for the vulnerable, you take this submission into account and action be taken. I anticipate that this Inquiry will receive submissions from additional women who have experienced abuse within the SSPX community. Such testimonies may assist in establishing a systematic pattern of grooming, silencing, spiritual, physical, psychological

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<https://www.salvemariaregina.info/Modesty.html#:~:text=Marylike%20dresses%20require%20full%20and,the%20back%20of%20the%20neck.>

¹⁰⁶ https://fsspx.ca/sites/default/files/documents/angelus_september-october_2021_selections.pdf

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgK12xA6igE>

¹⁰⁸ <https://sspx.news/en/news/encyclical-sacra-virginitas-pope-pius-xii-consecrated-virginity-21677#:~:text=11.%20By%20these%20words%20the%20divine%20Master,to%20be%20really%20perfect%20must%20be%20perpetual?>

¹⁰⁹ <https://fsspx.news/en/news/encyclical-sacra-virginitas-pope-pius-xii-consecrated-virginity-21677>

¹¹⁰ <https://sspx.org/en/news/contraception-church-vs-francis-7056>

and sexual abuse, and institutional protectionism within the SSPX network throughout Victoria, Australia and internationally.

93. I respectfully request that the Inquiry undertake the following investigations and actions:

- a. Conduct a comprehensive investigation into the SSPX organization and the recruitment methodologies employed by SSPX churches and educational institutions.
- b. Examine the retention strategies implemented by SSPX and similar institutions and their impact on community members.
- c. Assess the adequacy of mandatory reporting compliance mechanisms within SSPX schools and religious congregations.
- d. Implement requirements that SSPX schools demonstrate adherence to equivalent safety and transparency standards mandated for all Victorian and Australian educational institutions prior to receiving public funding.
- e. Ensure legislative implementation of the recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, specifically to protect individuals who have been harmed—and continue to be harmed—by SSPX practices.
- f. Establish accessible, trauma-informed support services for survivors of religious abuse that operate independently of SSPX oversight or influence.

94. More specifically I would like the outcomes of this Inquiry to consider:

Actions	Details
Update educational oversight laws	• Mandatory secular curriculum standards: Laws requiring all schools (including religious ones) to meet minimum secular educational standards, including critical thinking skills, civic education, and exposure to diverse perspectives. No religious exemptions for core subjects like science, history, and social studies. • Enhanced homeschooling monitoring: Regular inspections of homeschooling environments by trained social workers who can identify signs of coercive control, isolation, and educational neglect. Mandatory annual assessments that go beyond academic progress to evaluate social development and exposure to outside perspectives. • Mandatory reporting for educators: Specific training for all educators (including those in religious schools) to recognize signs of institutional abuse, family coercion related to religious compliance, and isolation tactics.
Update Child Protection Expansions	• Removal of religious exemptions: Eliminate religious exemptions from child protection laws, making it clear that "religious freedom" cannot override child safety and wellbeing. • Coercive control as child abuse: Expand definitions of child abuse to include psychological coercion, isolation from family members, and using religious authority to manipulate children's relationships and life choices. • Independent advocacy rights: Laws ensuring children in religious communities have access to independent advocates who can help them understand their rights and options without parental or institutional interference.
Improve Adult Protection Measures	• Coercive control legislation: Comprehensive laws (like those in some UK jurisdictions) that recognize psychological abuse, financial control, and social isolation as forms of domestic abuse - applicable to institutional as well as intimate partner contexts. • Exit support requirements: Laws requiring religious organizations to provide information about exit support services, similar to how some jurisdictions require domestic violence resources to be posted in certain locations.

	Financial transparency: Requirements for religious organizations to disclose how member contributions are used, preventing financial exploitation disguised as religious duty.
Improve Institutional Accountability	- Independent and secular mandatory reporters and reporting for religious institutions and leaders: Laws making clergy mandatory reporting for child abuse, domestic violence, and coercive control, with no religious privilege exemptions. - Institutional liability: Clear legal frameworks holding religious institutions liable for harm caused by their practices, policies, or failure to protect vulnerable members. - Victim compensation schemes: Government-funded compensation programs for survivors of institutional religious abuse, recognizing the long-term psychological and economic impacts.
Implement Mandatory Systemic Monitoring	- Cult awareness education: Mandatory education in schools about coercive control, manipulation tactics, and healthy vs. unhealthy group dynamics. - Professional oversight: Regular licensing and oversight of religious schools and institutions, with the power to revoke operating licenses for institutions that engage in harmful practices.
Implement Anti-Isolation Laws	- Family contact protection: Laws preventing religious organizations from advising parents to cut contact with adult children who leave the group. This could include penalties for institutional leaders who counsel family severance as religious duty. - Communication rights for minors: Legal guarantees that children in religious communities maintain access to extended family, secular education resources, and outside support systems, regardless of institutional policies. - Exit counselling access: Requirements that religious organizations provide information about independent counselling services and exit support, similar to cooling-off periods in consumer contracts.
Improve Financial Protection	- Economic coercion prevention: Laws preventing religious organizations from requiring members to surrender assets, limit employment opportunities, or become financially dependent as conditions of membership. - Exit financial support: Government-funded transition assistance for people leaving high-control religious groups, including job training, housing assistance, and mental health support.
Implement Institutional Accountability	- Whistleblower protection: Strong legal protections for current and former members who report abuse or coercive practices within religious organizations. - Corporate liability: Laws holding religious organizations legally responsible for psychological harm caused by their policies, including family alienation and coercive control practices. - Therapeutic privilege limits: Removal of counselling or therapeutic privileges for religious leaders who are not licensed mental health professionals, preventing manipulation disguised as spiritual guidance.
Provide Vulnerable Adult Protection	- Coercive control recognition: Expanded domestic violence laws that recognize institutional coercive control, including religious organizations using shame, guilt, and social pressure to control adult members. - Capacity assessments: Legal frameworks to evaluate whether adults in high-control religious groups can make truly free decisions about major life choices (marriage, career, finances).
Implement Religious Recruitment Regulation	- Informed consent requirements: Laws requiring religious organizations to clearly disclose their expectations, restrictions, and consequences of leaving before someone joins or commits significant resources. - Cooling-off periods: Mandatory waiting periods before major commitments (like arranged marriages, financial donations, or severing family ties) can be finalized. - Age restrictions: Laws preventing recruitment of minors into high-commitment religious groups without independent advocacy and court approval. - The key principle would be that religious freedom cannot override basic human rights to family relationships, education, economic independence, and psychological wellbeing - especially for children and vulnerable adults who may lack the power to protect themselves.

Update and Extend Anti-bullying law	• Extend and build the Brodie's Law Framework to be expanded to explicitly cover institutional religious bullying, with serious bullying as a crime punishable by up to 10 years in jail NCBI and include: • Institutional coercion patterns: Recognize that religious authority figures using systematic shame, guilt, and fear tactics constitutes "repeated bullying behaviour". • Group-directed harm: Extend coverage beyond individual bullies to institutional policies that create mental harm through isolation and family severance. • Mandatory secular oversight: Require independent monitoring of religious schools to ensure anti-bullying policies are genuinely implemented, not just on paper • Professional counseling access: Mandate that all schools provide access to secular, qualified counselors - not just religious "guidance" • Exit information rights: Require all schools to inform students about their legal rights and support services available outside the religious community
Create Specific Cult Targeted Provisions in Anti-Bullying	• Retreat and camp regulations: Apply anti-bullying laws to religious retreats, camps, and youth programs, requiring: ○ Independent oversight during intensive religious programs ○ Prohibition on isolation tactics and sleep deprivation ○ Right to external communication and complaint mechanisms • Adult authority accountability: It can apply to bullying by young people in schools (although children under ten cannot be charged with a criminal offence) • Digital era updates: Include online shaming, monitoring, and isolation tactics used by religious groups as forms of cyberbullying under existing frameworks • Current definition expansion: Brodie's law will apply to the most serious types of bullying behaviour. For it to apply there must be a course of conduct, that is, repeated bullying behaviour. The bully must also intend that the bullying cause physical or mental harm, including self-harm, to the victim
Enforcement Mechanisms for Anti-Bullying	• Civil remedies: Allow victims to seek compensation from religious institutions for psychological harm caused by systematic bullying practices. • License revocation: Give education departments power to revoke operating licenses from religious schools that fail to protect students from institutional bullying. • Mandatory intervention: Require child protection services to investigate when multiple complaints emerge from the same religious institution. • Essential to this would be recognizing that Brodie's law can apply to all forms of serious bullying, including physical bullying, psychological bullying, verbal bullying and cyberbullying

95. I understand the challenge is balancing religious freedom with protection of vulnerable people - but the principle should be that religious freedom cannot be used as a shield for practices that cause demonstrable psychological, social, or physical harm, especially to children and dependent adults. This inquiry represents a critical opportunity for accountability and justice—not only for personal circumstances, but for the protection of the vulnerable who remain within these institutional systems.

Respectfully,

Dr Marisha McAuliffe

29th July 2025

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